

FACTS OF INTEREST TO CONFERENCE ON RURAL READING
September 24-26, 1951, Washington, D. C.

(Fact Sheet prepared by organizations participating in the Conference.)

THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

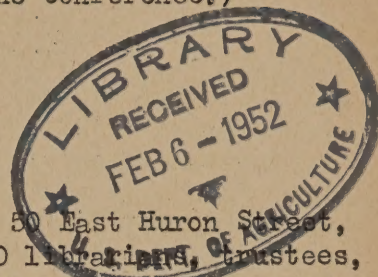
The American Library Association, with headquarters at 50 East Huron Street, Chicago 11, Ill., the professional organization of over 20,000 librarians, trustees, and friends of libraries, since its inception 75 years ago, has sought to improve existing libraries and to extend library service throughout the land.

Librarians recognize their responsibility to furnish the "know-how" for library organization and service but they realize that the need and desire of lay people for this service is basic to sound library development. Although ALA's professional books and periodicals are written in lay language for citizen use, librarians count on the popular periodical press, newspapers, radio, films, television, and meetings of lay groups to stimulate a desire and to create a recognition of need for library service. Popular human-interest stories, book reviews, and subject lists have been used successfully in periodicals and newspapers. Librarians find that the radio proves effective for book reviews, book and group discussions, story hours, and spot announcements popularizing the local library's services. Librarians are now investigating and using TV for story hours, book reviews, discussion groups, and program planning. For 3 years, through its Film Office, ALA offered consultative service on film use. Through its demonstrations of film circulation by libraries, in Missouri and Cleveland, it showed how to organize a film circuit economically, and supplied critical film evaluations and buying lists, standards to use in judging films, and illustrative guides to effective film use. Last year, 87 libraries throughout the country used 17,032 films which were used 48,470 times and were seen by 3,738,446 persons.

ALA cooperation with lay and professional groups, in providing active participation and in providing exhibits, book lists, and program planning, not only aids the organization, but enlists support in expanding these services. As an example of such support, rural sociologists have given extension librarians help in developing county or multi-county libraries. Close cooperation with the General Federation of Womens Clubs and Home Demonstration Clubs, to mention only two women's groups, has resulted in many new libraries. "Friends of the Library" organizations have produced substantial results. Similarly, librarians on the State and local level find such cooperation valuable.

ALA has long encouraged the use of demonstrations of county and regional library service to convince people of the value of the library's services. With few exceptions, once people have had really good library service they are willing to support it with their tax dollars.

The ALA Washington office seeks to draw Congressional attention to the Nation's library needs. All legislation affecting libraries is followed and promoted, but chief emphasis is placed on legislation designed to strengthen and extend library service to rural areas. Pending bills provide for \$7,500,000



annually for 5 years to be allocated to the States on the basis of rural population plus a grant of \$40,000. States must match these funds according to their per capita income. Each State would have control of the money to be spent on rural library services.

Through its Booklist ALA offers critical evaluation of current books, and through special publications offers buying lists and critical standards for use in selecting books. ALA works with publishers to solve mutual problems and to ascertain what kinds of books people need and want and how they can be provided by reprinting or finding the right authors in needed subjects.

ALA offers some consultant service to those interested in developing rural library service, but always urges working through and with State library extension agencies and, with any local library authorities, and with interested local lay organizations and individuals. Farmers Bulletin 1847 of the USDA, "Rural Library Service," (in your envelope) lists the State library authorities with whom interested organizations and individuals will want to work.

Even a casual glance at ALA's structural organization and its publications discloses the emphasis placed on rural library extension and the attention focused on the needs of the 33,000,000 Americans now without the services of a local library. It also reveals concern for the development of good rural reading and the role of the library as an evaluator, selector, and distributor of library materials.

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF COOPERATION

The American Institute of Cooperation is a national educational organization sponsored by farmer cooperatives and other farm organizations, and by leaders from the Land Grant colleges of the United States. It was organized in 1925 and expanded to a year-round program in 1945.

The Institute is not a policy-making body and engages in no legislative activity. Its only commodities are education and information.

The Institute is supported by voluntary contributions from farmer business associations. Its staff works primarily with cooperative leaders, research, educational, and extension workers; state cooperative councils, and the press. It conducts and stimulates studies relative to cooperative business. It publishes pertinent information on these subjects.

Throughout the year, it works closely with the Land Grant colleges, departments of education, and other institutions and agencies in sponsoring workshops and training schools for cooperative directors, managers, and employees, extension workers, college teachers, and research workers. Likewise, it sponsors workshops for teachers of vocational agriculture, veteran-on-farm-trainers, and the leaders of farm youth programs.

The Institute's most important event of the year is its annual summer session. This is an intensive meeting and is usually held on the campus of a Land Grant college. The entire session is organized to bring out the best thinking available, to exchange ideas, and to stimulate further research and education in all phases of farmer cooperative activity.

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THE OFFICE OF INFORMATION, U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The Office of Information, U.S.D.A., plays mostly an indirect role in stimulating rural reading. Its chief purpose is to "disseminate information" about Department research and action programs. To accomplish this purpose, the Office works closely with those who do reach the public directly--through the press, radio and television, and films.

Members of the Information staff prepare press releases, radio talks, and films; edit the Yearbook of Agriculture; and cooperate with editors and free-lance writers who write about the work of the Department.

Another part of the Information job is to see that the farm press and directors of farm radio programs are supplied, at their request, with Farmers' Bulletins and other publications issued by the Department, and with annual reports of research and other agencies. Such information serves as background for newspaper, magazine, and radio writers.

Books written by Department personnel, as well as other books of particular interest to rural people, are often reviewed briefly in the Farm Paper Letter, sent regularly to about 250 editors of farm papers, and in USDA, the employee news sheet which reaches more than 40,000 employees. Book reviews include the publisher's name and address, and information as to whether the book is available in the Department library or in the Library of Congress.

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS, U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U.S.D.A. jointly with the Extension Service issues a closely selected annotated list of rural fiction published in this country during the preceding year. In making the selection, the aim is to include well-written books each of which leaves the reader better acquainted with some phase of rural life, character, work, problem, scene, time, or attitude. The notations indicate the general locality and time of material and the elements of the story that make particularly for significance. These usually involve social or economic aspects. Several periodicals reprint this list each year. As most, who request the list, wish to use it in connection with programs or study courses, the ultimate use is wide.

The mailing list is built strictly on a request basis but several copies can be sent to one address if they are wanted. To a limited extent, previous lists, or even complete files of lists beginning in 1936, can be supplied. Address Division of Economic Information, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

LIBRARY -- DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The Department of Agriculture Library is interested in helping to improve access to published material in rural areas. Throughout its history it has cooperated with the Federal and State Extension Services and other governmental agencies, national, State and local library and educational agencies, and others to this end. A specific example of the type of cooperation provided by the Department Library in this field is the Rural Reading List, which was issued as Library List No. 39, and which selectively covers all fields.

The field branches of the Department Library loan approximately a million volumes and issues of periodicals a year to people outside of Washington, and from 30,000 to 40,000 articles are supplied a year in microfilm or photostat. Thus the Department of Agriculture Library is one of the important sources from which people all over the country obtain literature they need, either directly or through their local library on interlibrary loan.

THE DEPARTMENT OF RURAL EDUCATION, NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

The Department of Rural Education, National Education Association is active in the field of rural reading and may be summarized under two chief headings:

A. Program of publications for rural people

1. Reading material has been made available at little or no cost and promoted for rural leaders in the following areas:
 - a. Rural education in elementary and secondary schools.
 - b. Understanding the rural child.
 - c. Cooperation between school and community and between farm leaders and teachers.
 - d. Special services for rural children through the intermediate unit of school administration.
 - e. News sheets on rural life and education.
 - f. Bibliographies on rural life and education.
 - g. Publications and suggestions for reading sent out in answer to numerous requests for information on a wide variety of subjects which reach Department headquarters from rural areas.
2. Department reading material has been distributed and promoted through:
 - a. Local educators and lay leaders in rural areas with whom the Department maintains contact.
 - b. Regional and national conferences on rural life and education.
 - c. Making publications available at little or no cost to the Extension Service of the United States Department of Agriculture and other organizations functioning in rural areas.
3. A Department Committee on Publications and Constructive Studies made up of outstanding rural educators from various parts of the country, works constantly with the Department headquarters staff to appraise rural reading needs, especially of rural educators, and plan publications to fill those needs.

B. Promotion of libraries and reading rooms

1. The Department of Rural Education has used its influence and resources to promote in rural areas the establishment and use of reading centers and libraries -- both stationary and ambulatory.
2. The Department has insisted that rural school planning include adequate library facilities for the use of teachers and pupils.
3. The Department has encouraged the use of facilities in public school buildings as library centers and reading rooms for the use of all the citizens of the community--adult and youth--at hours convenient to the various groups.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Library of Congress works toward the improvement and extension of reading by inhabitants of rural America, but these activities are necessarily restricted by the nature and purpose of our main function--service to the Congress of the United States. We do, however, have a deep appreciation of the need and importance of constructive activities in this sphere which we translate into action whenever possible.

Under its policy of providing "special service to scholarship," the Library has been able to make certain limited contributions. Through the inter-library loan service, the Library lends otherwise not available books to individuals from rural areas who are conducting independent and scholarly research, upon the simple request of their local librarians. For such individuals, the Library waives its rule which ordinarily prohibits the lending of books currently in print to other institutions. It goes to special lengths in searching for titles of publications thus requested, neither of which is done, or done to the same extent, for non-rural libraries. Of course, the microfilming and photostating services which are available in the Library to the public generally are available, and sometimes of especial importance, to rural readers, since they make the major resources of the Library utilizable by the remotest reader. To indicate what these resources are, the Library gives special attention to requests for bibliographies from rural researchers. Finally, the Library of Congress prepares and distributes catalog cards for use by extension libraries, county and State libraries, etc., in order to provide information on source materials available.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

United States Information Overseas Centers of the Office of Educational Exchange, Department of State give active free library service to the peoples of 59 countries, including extension services to their rural areas. The nature of interest in Extension Services is disclosed in their desire to exchange ideas with others who are working in the promotion of reading in rural areas and those who are working with groups of foreign-born Americans who have a limited reading knowledge of English. Interest ranges from promotion and administration of extension services and selection of appropriate materials, to methods of measuring effectiveness. They are also interested in cooperating with publishers in order that appropriate printed materials may be available on the book market.

Books and other materials in the Centers are selected to give the widest range of up-to-date information about what Americans are doing and thinking in various fields - science, agriculture, health, education, industry, engineering, medicine, etc. Every effort is made to provide publications of the greatest interest and value to each country. The evidence is that the impact of such services all over the world is both immediate and lasting.

For example, a medical social worker in a hospital at Copenhagen who studied in the United States, has requested publications on U. S. developments in social case work for use in classes which she conducts on this subject. The Council of Burma Industries (an organization to develop industries in Burma) regularly borrows U. S. technical journals. Recently, one of the Centers in Italy filled requests for copies of technical articles, information on textile fibers, radio beams, and citrus fruit, rubber, and chemical industries. Materials on U. S. police administration and procedure have been supplied to inquirers at Rangoon, Hanoi, Djakarta in the Far East and many Centers in Latin America. Montevideo and Madrid have been furnished information on the establishment of blood banks. Publications from the Center at Cairo were made available on request to the Ministry of Social Affairs prior to the passage of a law establishing a social security system for Egypt. Material on this subject is also utilized by the students at the Cairo School for Social Work and the American University at Cairo.

Successful Methods that have been used successfully to promote reading include:

1. Distribution of free and inexpensive materials to schools, clubs, and other organized groups to create interest, and the filling of requests for information and materials.
2. Individual loan service of reading materials of wide range by mail.
3. Use of combined film showing and distribution and/or loan of materials.

Thus the United States Information Centers are assisting other nations to develop their own resources. At the same time, they are laying a solid foundation of correct information about, and understanding of, the United States among the peoples of the world.

U. S. Department of Agriculture
Extension Service
Washington 25, D. C.

Facts of Interest to Conference on Rural Reading

NATIONAL GRANGE

The Grange being a grass-roots farm family organization composed of community units meeting regularly twice each month; one of the features of all regular meetings is an educational type of program. This program is an educational medium in which the members of the Grange participate. Libraries have a distinct function and use in the development and promotion of these programs. Aside from the fact that Grange members as such have use for libraries, these folks are greatly interested in securing adequate library facilities for their communities.

Many of the local Granges have been instrumental in securing library facilities for their local community, through local public libraries, through bookmobile projects, or through school libraries. Many other communities have a loan service to the rural areas whereby library books may be secured by mail either for loan directly to individuals or as a loan by a larger State library to the local community library either publicly maintained by the community or operated through the school.

The officer of the Grange who is responsible for the programs in the Grange meeting is the lecturer. In a number of the states the State Grange lecturer maintains a loan library made up principally of program material and helps for the local Grange lecturer.

Local, county, and State Granges have been quite instrumental in securing government appropriations from local, county, and State units of government to promote rural library facilities. One State has a law providing for matching funds by State and county governments in extending library facilities to unserved rural areas.

The National Grange in its 1950 convention adopted a resolution approving the extension of library facilities to all rural areas.

two World Wars and an increasing number of rural youth attending high schools and colleges. With electricity reaching farther out into rural areas, the increase of mechanized farms, and more conveniently equipped homes, there is more time for reading in thousands of farm homes.

Adequate library facilities do not exist in a large number of counties and rural communities. In such areas home demonstration agents of the Extension Service are giving encouragement and guidance to home demonstration groups, county home demonstration councils, 4-H Clubs, and other rural groups in an effort to make books available to more rural families.

A recent inquiry sent to 48 States, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico brought replies from 41 State home demonstration leaders. The following information indicates some organized effort on the part of home demonstration groups in getting better library facilities for rural communities.

Good Reading Programs

Reading good books in rural homes is emphasized in the home demonstration program in 28 States, and plans are prepared for making books available when necessary.

Cooperation of State and County Libraries

Helpful cooperation on the part of State and county libraries is reported by 28 States. These are the many ways in which libraries have assisted home demonstration agents and rural groups in the good reading programs:

- (1) State libraries make loans of up to 50 books to community or club libraries.
- (2) State and county libraries make loans of books to county extension offices for use by extension agents and rural people.
- (3) Special shelves are set aside for rural women in county libraries.
- (4) Exhibits on special subjects or for special occasions are set up when requested by extension agents.
- (5) Reading lists are prepared and the books listed are included in bookmobile libraries, and reading lists which extension agents can distribute to home demonstration groups and 4-H Clubs are also prepared.
- (6) Librarians talk at training meetings for extension agents and before groups of rural people, especially at home demonstration and 4-H Club meetings.
- (7) State or county librarians prepare circulars or assist in their preparation. Examples: Nebraska--"Reading Can Be Fun" and "Building a Reading Program;" Washington--"Our County Extension Service Get Together To Plan Work and Help;" North Carolina--"Good Reading for Home Demonstration Clubs."

Home Demonstration Clubs Establish Small Libraries and Conduct Reading Programs

Bookmobiles are filling a great need in many counties where library facilities are not easily accessible. More bookmobiles are needed.

In counties and in isolated communities that are without any type of library service, county home demonstration councils and home demonstration clubs have established small libraries or book collections. Nineteen States report 1,637 such libraries established. Home demonstration club members sometimes volunteer to act as librarians. The collection is usually kept in some home in the community. Libraries serving larger areas may be located at the county extension office, at the village filling station or at some other center. In a sparsely populated county in Wyoming a community library has been sponsored and operated by the same home demonstration club for 20 years.

Illinois reports that Extension's effort along this line is in the direction of getting county libraries established in all counties. The Georgia Home Demonstration Council raised \$2,500 for a bookmobile to serve as a demonstration in teaching the value of libraries and library extension to counties and areas not now served. Community improvement programs in a number of States have resulted in the development of local library service in a good many communities.

In at least 28 States planned effort is made to encourage the reading of good books by rural women who belong to home demonstration groups, including the younger women. Lists of good books are distributed to many women. Book reviews are given at club meetings in 28 States, and group discussion at community meetings may be based on opinions or facts as expressed in good books read by men or women.

Crowded home conditions and poor lighting are not inductive to reading. House furnishing is an important phase of the housing project in home demonstration work. Thirty-six States report that reading centers and better lighting for reading are emphasized in house-furnishing programs.

Certificates Awarded

Although reading good books brings its own reward, extension workers in 16 States have found that awarding certificates to women who read a certain number of books and report on them has stimulated more reading.

North Carolina reports that 3,793 book review certificates were awarded in 1950. To comply with the requirements of the Extension Service and the State library commission three books are read and reviewed. Mississippi reported 851 certificates of merit awarded, and West Virginia reported 5,407 book reading plan certificates awarded to men and women. In several States, certificates for reading are also awarded to 4-H Club members.

4-H Club Members Encouraged To Read

Extension agents have an opportunity to interest teen-age boys and girls in reading good books. There are nearly 2,000,000 boys and girls enrolled in 4-H Club work. When growing children are not exposed to good books in their homes, special effort sometimes has to be made by teachers and local 4-H Club leaders to interest them in reading when they become teen-agers.

Special reading lists for boys and girls and young men and women have been prepared by librarians and extension workers in a large number of States. In some States books for boys and girls are included in the book packets lent by State and county libraries to home demonstration groups. In all family life programs in home demonstration work, good reading for all ages in the family is emphasized.

Exhibits of good books have been put on at State and county 4-H Club Camps. They are often known as browsing corners. Librarians give camp talks on good books to read and how to read them. In communities where there are library facilities, 4-H Club members are encouraged by extension agents and local 4-H Club leaders to use the libraries. Special assignments in connection with regular 4-H projects take the older club members to the libraries. In some States 4-H Clubs have assisted in establishing community libraries and bookmobiles.

Comments by Home Demonstration Leaders on Problems To Solve

1. Great distances from central libraries, inadequate library or none, insufficient funds to support county free library, existing libraries not open daily to serve people at their convenience-- these are some of the obstacles in certain areas.
2. Bookmobiles serve a definite need. There are too few of them in all or most States. Too few books are found in most homes.
3. Poor habits of reading are too frequent. Lack of understanding or appreciation of the value of good reading for both adults and youth is too often lacking. Reading habits are not developed in early life.
4. There are not enough suitable, quiet reading centers for family members, and many homes have inadequate lighting.
5. There is lack of trained personnel to guide people in selection of reading material, the value of reading, and how to get the most from reading, both for self-improvement and for relaxation and enjoyment.